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THE BRIDEGROOM'S RING

—TWO PAHARI TALES

ASHOK DONGRE

Amar Chitra Katha
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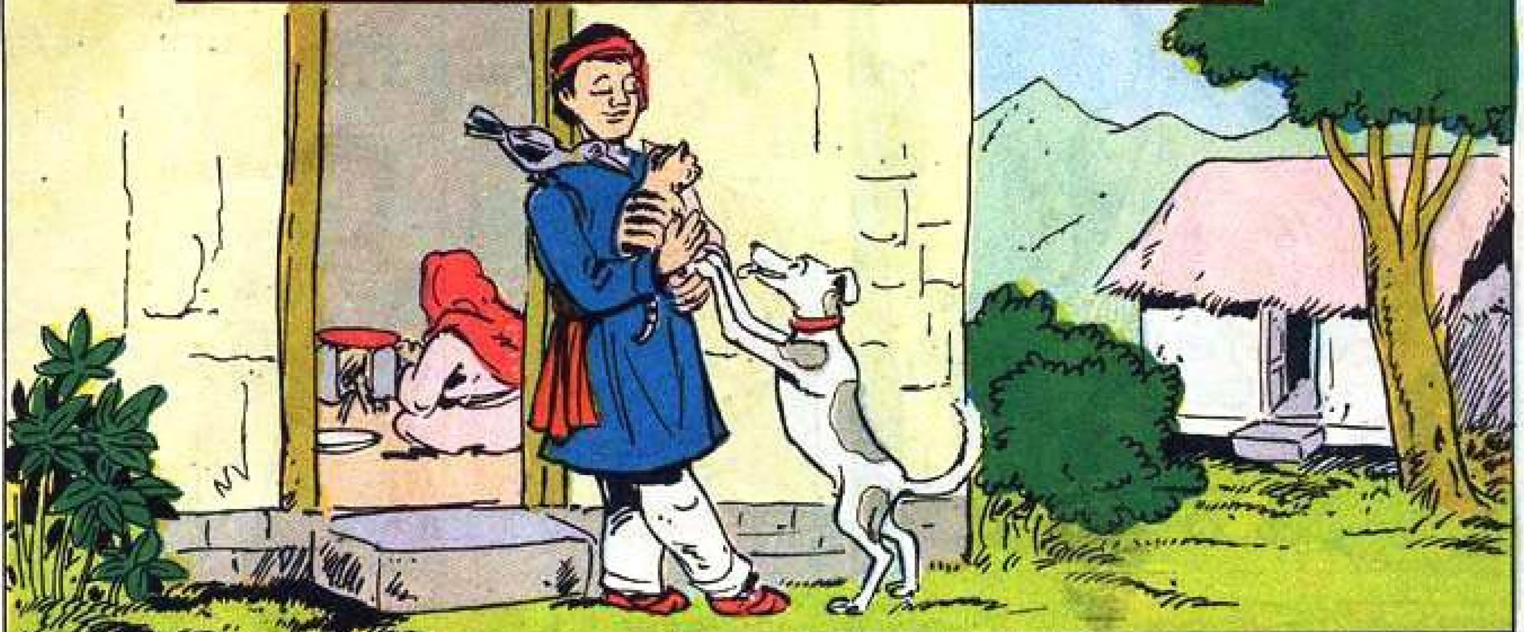
The Bridegroom's Ring

There are many who love to tell a story and many more who love to listen to one. And each time a story is retold, it acquires a new colour and a fresh dimension.

The grandmother who heard a story as a little girl from her grandmother, tells the same story to her grandchild but with a few embellishments of her own. The traveller from a distant land who happens to hear a story in the course of his travels, later tells it to his own people, modifying it to make it more dramatic or more acceptable to his audience.

This Amar Chitra Katha retells two folktales from Garhwal in Uttar Pradesh.

THE BRIDEGROOM'S RING



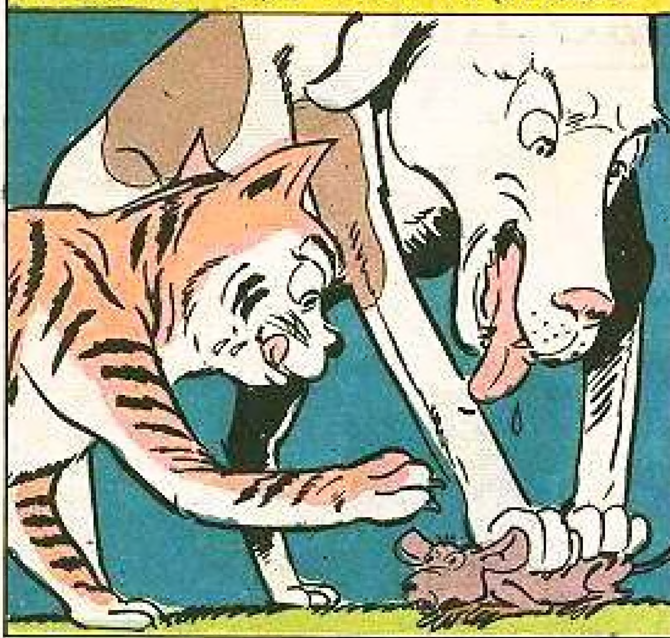











AS THE CAT WAS ABOUT TO STRIKE...

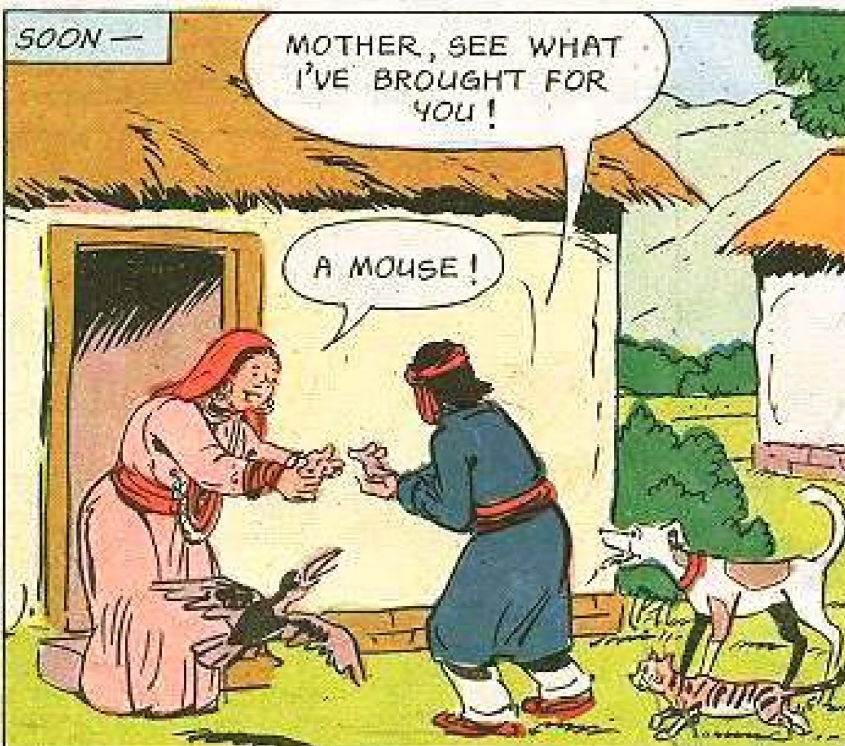

...IT FOUND ITSELF LIFTED OFF THE GROUND.
OUCH!


I'M SORRY, DEAR. I WON'T LET YOU HARM THE LITTLE ONE.


BHOLA GENTLY DROPPED THE CAT...


...AND PICKED UP THE FRIGHTENED MOUSE.
SMILE, LITTLE ONE. NO HARM WILL COME TO YOU.


I'M TAKING YOU HOME.


SOON —
MOTHER, SEE WHAT I'VE BROUGHT FOR YOU!
A MOUSE!


HE IS SO CUTE!


THE MOUSE TURNED OUT TO BE SMART TOO.
WHY IS HE DIGGING SO HARD?






YOU'VE BROUGHT SOMETHING FOR ME!


WHAT IS IT?


A GOLD MOHUR!


THE MOUSE SEEMED TO BE AN EXPERT TREASURE-HUNTER.


SOON BHOLA AND HIS MOTHER WERE ABLE TO MOVE INTO A BIG HOUSE!


NOW THAT WE HAVE A FINE HOUSE...


... WHAT YOU NEED IS A WIFE!


SOON BHOLA'S MOTHER FOUND THE RIGHT GIRL FOR HIM...


... AND ALL THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE WEDDING WERE MADE.
THE WEDDING RING, TOO, IS READY.
IT'S BEAUTIFUL!


KEEP IT SAFE.
I CAN HARDLY WAIT FOR THE DAY.


HOWEVER, ON THE EVE OF THE WEDDING—
MOTHER ! WHAT'S THE MATTER ?
SOB... SOB...


THE RING ... THE WEDDING RING...


...IS MISSING.
OH!
SNIFF! SNIFF!


YOU MUST HAVE MISPLACED IT...
I HAVE LOOKED EVERYWHERE!


NO, BHOLA. SOMEONE HAS STOLEN IT.
STOLEN IT ?
SNIFF! SNIFF!


YES. ONE OF THE VISITORS TO WHOM I SHOWED THE WEDDING ORNAMENTS MUST HAVE WALKED AWAY WITH IT.
SNIFF! SNIFF!


BHOLA TURNED TO HIS ANIMAL FRIENDS —
YOU MUST FIND THE RING.


GO NOW.


DON'T COME BACK WITHOUT IT.


BUT WHERE DO WE FIND IT?
SH...
SNIFF! SNIFF!


DON'T DISTURB HIM. HE HAS PICKED UP THE SCENT.


SNIFF! SNIFF!


SNIFF... SNIFF... SNIFF..


YES ?
I'VE LOST IT !


THE THIEF MUST HAVE CROSSED THE RIVER !
THEN LET'S CROSS IT, TOO.


SO —






ANY LUCK ?
SH... NO... IT'S NO USE.


WHAT SHALL WE DO NOW?
FRIEND CROW MUST TAKE OVER NOW.


YES. I WILL LOOK FOR THE THIEF.


SOME TIME LATER —
HERE HE COMES!


I THINK I HAVE FOUND OUR MAN.
ARE YOU SURE?


YES. HE HAS IT ON HIS FINGER.


COME. LET'S HAVE A LOOK AT HIM.


FOLLOW ME.


THERE HE GOES!


SNIFF! SNIFF!


SHOO! GO AWAY!


YES. HE IS OUR MAN ALL RIGHT.


WHAT'S OUR NEXT MOVE?
LET'S FOLLOW HIM.


WHEN HE FALLS ASLEEP AT NIGHT...
... WE'LL GET HOLD OF IT!


SOON —
HE'S HAVING HIS LUNCH...
I WISH HE'D THROW US A MORSEL.

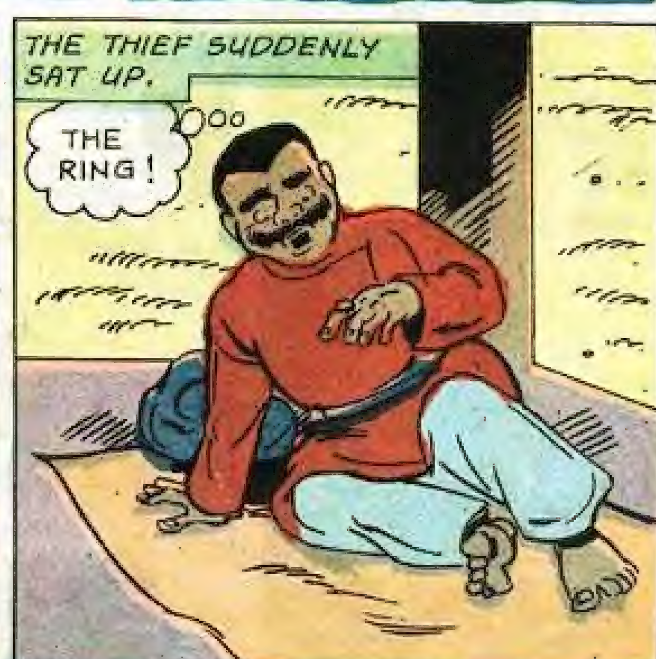

I AM SO HUNGRY.
SH... WE CAN THINK OF FOOD LATER.


UNAWARE THAT HE WAS BEING WATCHED THE THIEF WASHED HIS HANDS, HAD A DRINK OF WATER...


...SPREAD OUT A CLOTH...


...AND LAY HIMSELF DOWN.
THERE! HE IS ABOUT TO SLEEP.


COME!
WAIT! HE'S NOT YET ASLEEP.


THE THIEF SUDDENLY SAT UP.
THE RING!


HE TOOK IT OFF HIS FINGER ...


...PUT IT INTO HIS MOUTH...


...AND LAY DOWN AGAIN.
NOW I CAN SLEEP IN PEACE.
?


WHO WILL SNATCH THE RING?
I WILL.


WHAT?

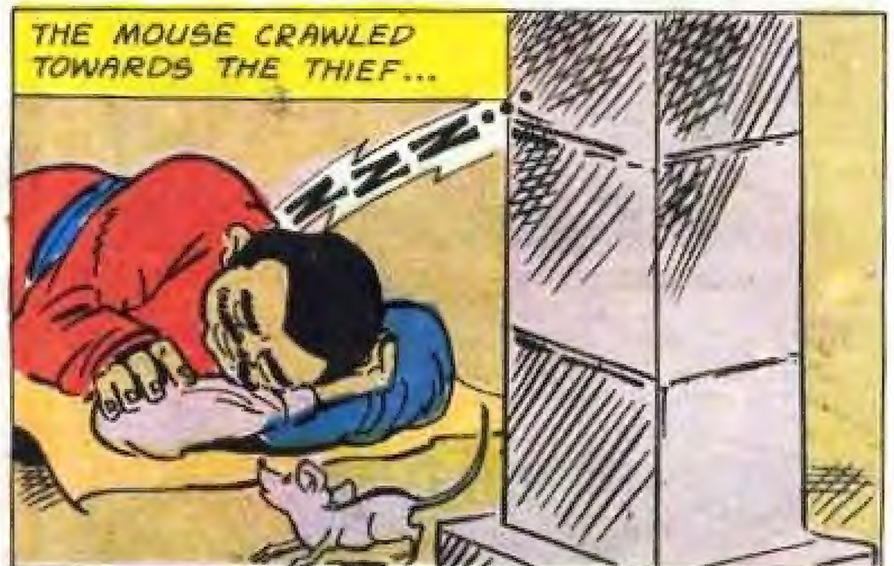

YOU MEAN YOU'LL GO INTO HIS MOUTH AND...
NO! I DON'T MEAN THAT AT ALL.


I'LL MAKE HIM THROW UP THE RING.


I'LL GRAB IT THE MOMENT IT FLIES OUT!


AND I'LL SEE TO IT THAT HE DOESN'T HARM YOU.


THEN, HERE I GO!


THE MOUSE CRAWLED TOWARDS THE THIEF...
ZZZ


...CLIMBED ONTO HIS CHEST...
ZZZ...


...MOVED ONTO HIS SHOULDER...


...AND TICKLED HIS NOSE WITH ITS TAIL.


AAA...


...CHOOO!


GOT IT?
I DID!


MY RING!


HEY YOU! COME BACK!


AS HE LEAPT TOWARDS THE FLEEING CAT...


...HE WAS MET HEAD ON BY THE DOG.
GRR...OWF!

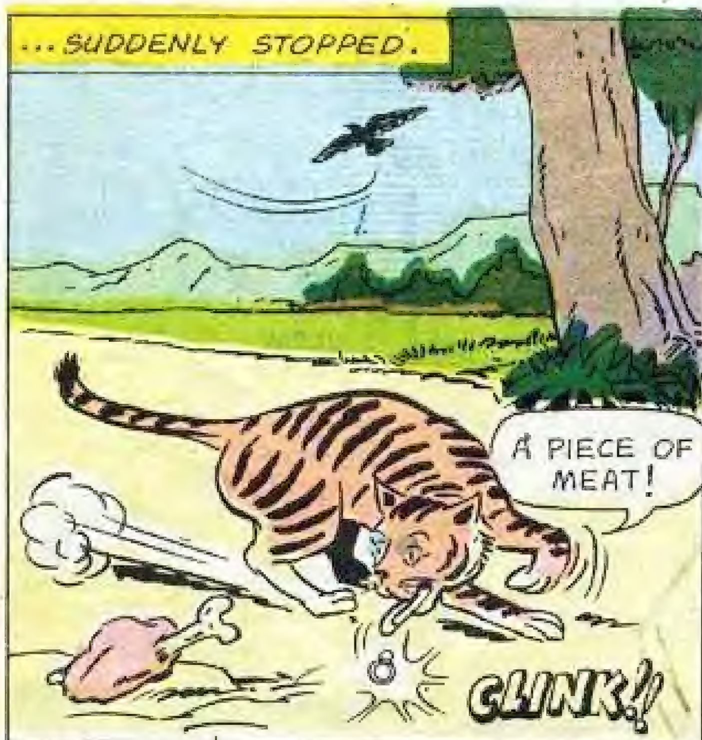














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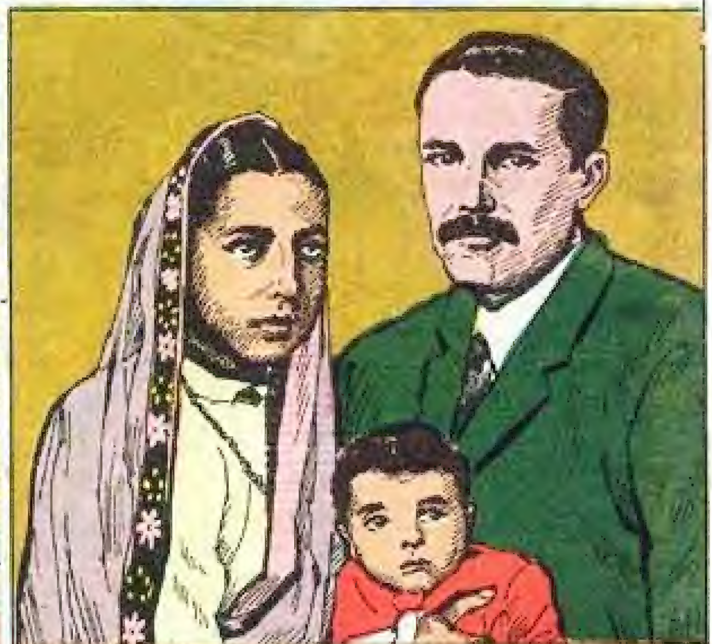
HIMACHAL PRADESH
THE VALLEY OF THE GODS

Script : Swarn Khandpur
Illustrated by : S.K. Parab

HIMACHAL PRADESH, AS THE NAME SUGGESTS, LIES IN THE HIMALAYAS. ITS HILLS AND VALLEYS PROVIDE RICH PASTURES FOR THE SHEEP AND GOATS THAT ARE REARED THERE IN LARGE NUMBERS.



IT IS THE 'APPLE STATE' OF INDIA. HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF HEAVILY-LADEN APPLE TREES DOT THE COUNTRYSIDE. APPLE ORCHARDS COVER SOME 100,000 HECTARES OF LAND IN THE STATE, AND EVERY YEAR MORE THAN 75,00,000 BOXES OF LUSCIOUS APPLES — GOLDEN, RED AND ROYAL DELICIOUS — ARE SENT OUT.



APPLES WERE INTRODUCED INTO THE STATE IN 1920, BY AN AMERICAN MISSIONARY, SAMUEL EVANS STOKES, WHO LATER TOOK THE NAME OF SATYANAND. HE ADOPTED THE HINDU WAY OF LIFE AND SETTLED DOWN IN KOTGARH. HIS PIONEERING WORK IN THE SCIENTIFIC CULTIVATION OF APPLES GAVE THE POOR PEASANTS UNDREAMT OF PROSPERITY.

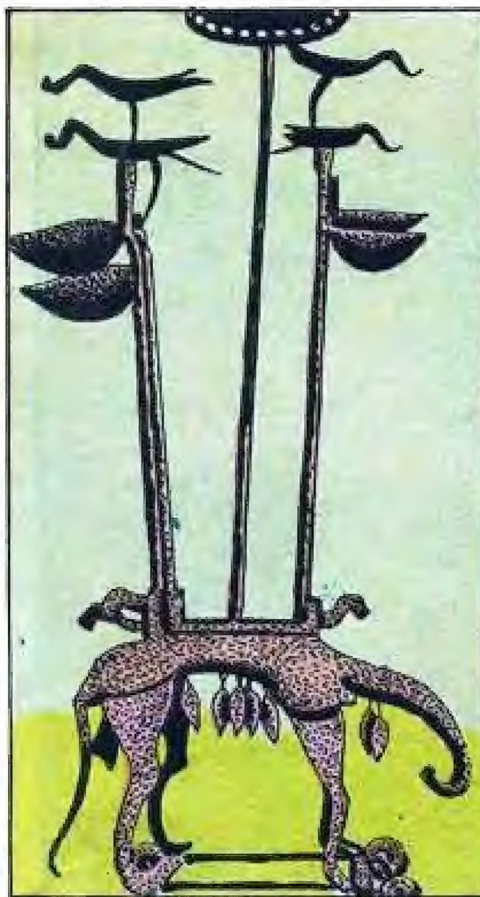




SOCIAL MEETINGS ARE NOT EASY IN THE HILLS. BUT FAIRS AND FESTIVALS ARE OCCASIONS FOR FUN AND FROLIC.

THE DUSSEHRA FESTIVAL AT KULU IS ONE SUCH OCCASION FOR BOTH GODS AND MEN. IN GAILY DECORATED PALANQUINS MINOR DEITIES FROM THE NEIGHBOURING VILLAGES COME OUT OF THEIR TEMPLES FOR A 'DURBAR' WITH RAGHUNATHJI, THE MAIN DEITY OF THE VALLEY OF KULU.

THE 'VALLEY OF THE GODS' THEN REVERBERATES WITH THE BEATING OF DRUMS, SONGS AND DANCES.





IT IS IN THESE FAIRS THAT TRADING IS DONE. EXQUISITELY DESIGNED SHAWLS, WOODEN VESSELS AND METALWARE ARE BOUGHT AND SOLD HERE.

THESE OBJECTS OF UTILITY AND BEAUTY ARE THE CREATIONS OF THE INGENIOUS ARTISANS OF THE REGION.

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL OF THEM ALL IS THE EMBROIDERED CHAMBA RUMAAL. ALTHOUGH LITERALLY 'RUMAAL' MEANS A HANDKERCHIEF, THE CHAMBA RUMAAL IS MUCH LARGER. IT FORMS AN IMPORTANT PART OF A BRIDE'S TROUSSEAU.






EVEN AS ITS TEETH SANK INTO THE MEAT, A HAWK SWOOPED DOWN...


...AND FLEW AWAY WITH THE RING.
!


GRRR...
GR...


WHAT HAPPENED? WHERE IS THE RING?


GR...GR...RRR.
OH! THE HAWK HAS IT!


LISTEN...




A DEAD MOUSE!

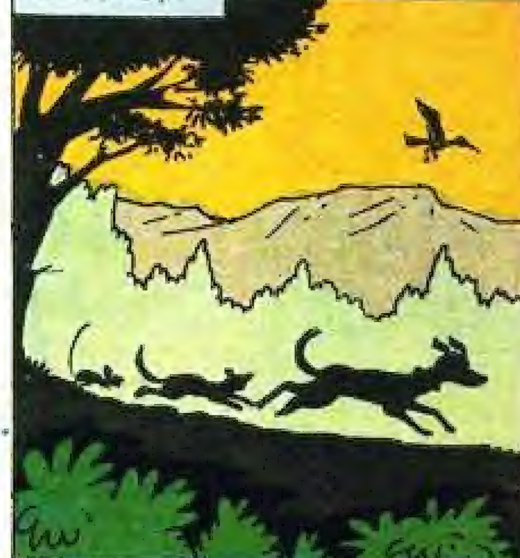





CLINK


AS THE CAT PICKED UP THE RING THE DOG CAME ALONG.
WHAT HAPPENED?


THE CROW TOLD THE DOG THE WHOLE STORY.
I THINK THE RING WOULD BE SAFER WITH YOU.


SO, THE DOG TOOK CHARGE OF THE RING AND THE FRIENDS BEGAN THEIR HOMEWARD JOURNEY.


THEY HAD TO CROSS THE RIVER AGAIN TO REACH THEIR MASTER.


ON THE WAY THE DOG SWALLOWED SOME WATER.
GLUB GLUB


AS IT SPAT THE WATER OUT —
PHOo
PLUNK


WHAT HAPPENED?
I'VE LOST THE RING.


NEVER MIND. WE'LL GET IT BACK.
HOW?


FIRST, LET'S REACH THE BANK.


AS SOON AS THEY REACHED THE BANK—
LET'S START DIGGING CANALS AND TURN THE COURSE OF THE RIVER.


THE FRIENDS WORKED HARD ...


...AND SLOWLY, BUT STEADILY, THE WATER STARTED FLOWING OUT.


HEY! WHAT'S HAPPENING?
I'LL SWIM UP TO THE SURFACE AND FIND OUT.

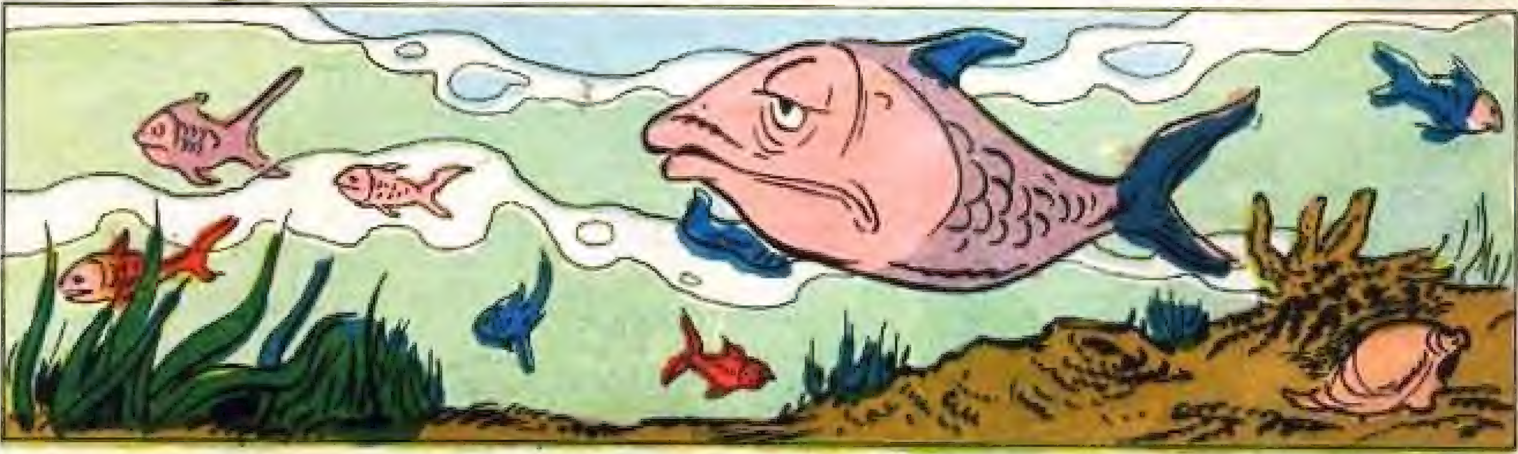



HEY! WHY ARE YOU CHANGING THE WATER'S COURSE?
TO FIND A MISSING RING.

THE FISH SWAM DOWN WITH THE NEWS.

THEY ARE CHANGING THE COURSE TO FIND A CURSED RING.

FIND THE RING AND BRING IT TO ME!



SOON A SMALL FISH BROUGHT THE RING TO THE CHIEF.

GIVE IT TO ME.

THE CHIEF SHOT UP CARRYING THE RING...

...AND OFFERED IT TO THE MOUSE.

WILL YOU LEAVE OUR RIVER ALONE NOW?

OF COURSE, WE WILL.

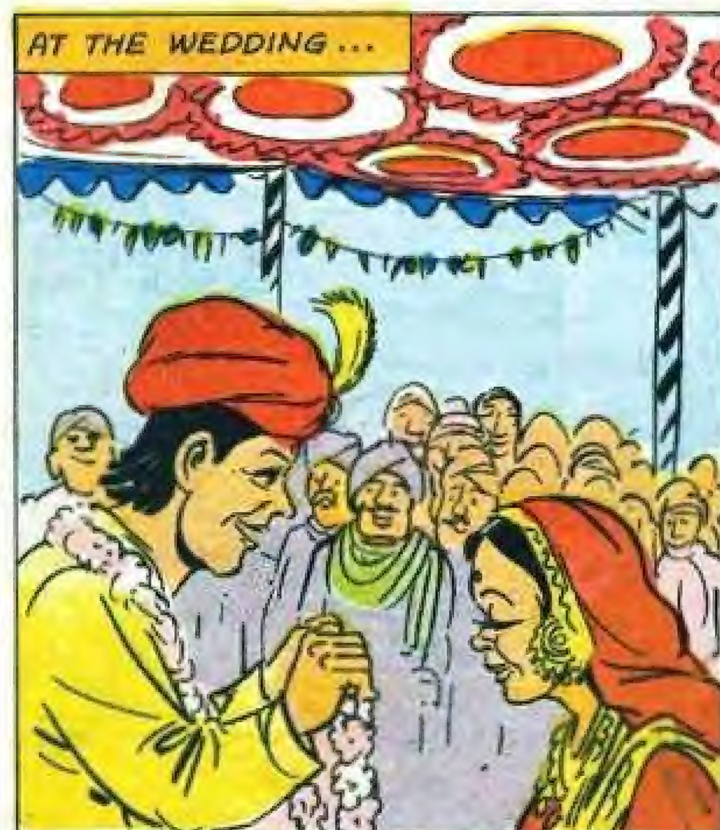

YOU MUST TAKE CARE OF THE RING NOW.


THE FRIENDS RESUMED THEIR JOURNEY...


...AND REACHED HOME WITHOUT ANY MORE MISHAPS.
HERE THEY COME!


THE NEXT MOMENT —
MOTHER!

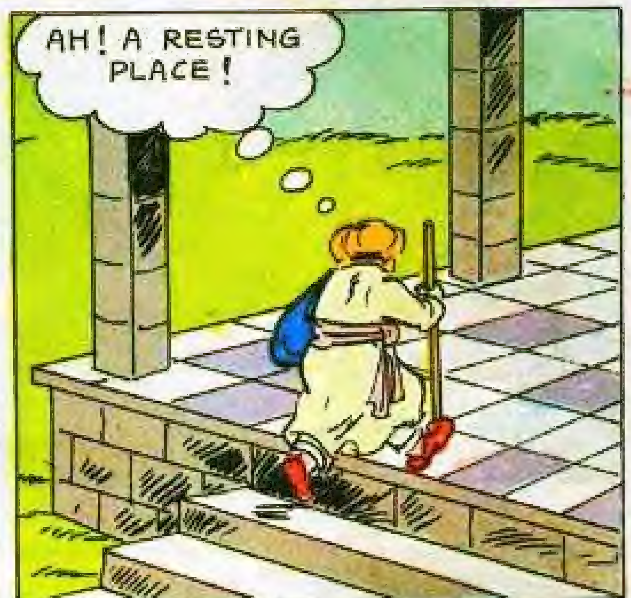

THEY HAVE BROUGHT BACK THE RING.
OH, MY DARLINGS!


AT THE WEDDING...


...THE ONES WHO STOLE THE SHOW WERE BHOLA'S FRIENDS.

THE KAYASTHA AND HIS GUEST













JUST THEN —
HELLO ! YOU HAVE A GUEST.
EH !
A DE - DE - DEMON !
YES, A DEMON BUT A GUEST ALL THE SAME.







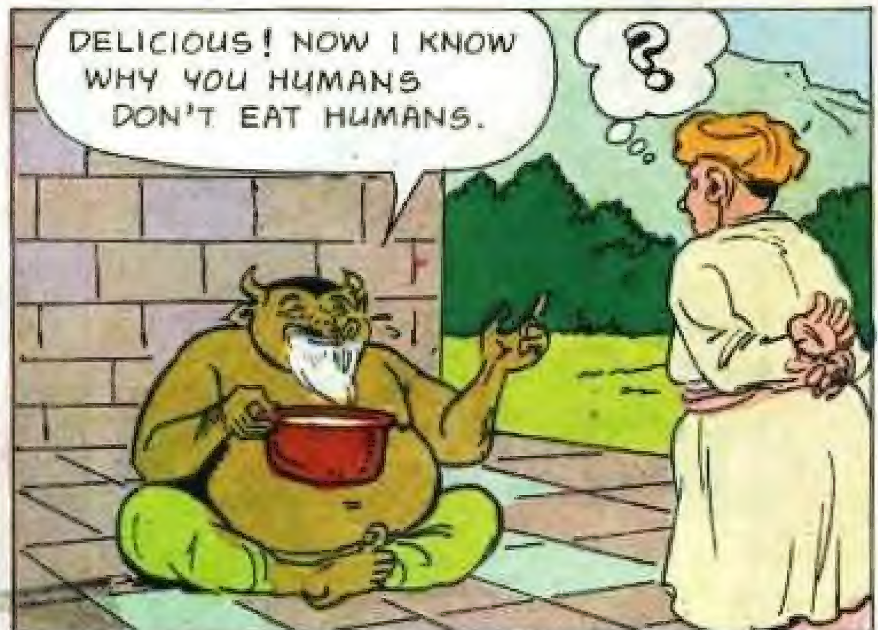





WHAT WAS I SAYING ? AH, YES. MY MENU... YES... BUT I AM TIRED OF EATING MEN...
YOU ARE ?


FOR A CHANGE LET ME HAVE THIS.
ALL OF IT! EAT ALL OF IT!


SLURP SLURP


DELICIOUS! NOW I KNOW WHY YOU HUMANS DON'T EAT HUMANS.
?


BY THE WAY, WHY HAVE YOU COME TO TOWN ?
TO FIND SOME WORK!


YOU WILL WORK FOR ME... AS MY COOK.
MOST WILLINGLY.


SO THE KAYASTHA SPENT A MONTH WORKING AS A COOK.


DELICIOUS!
I MUST ESCAPE BEFORE HE TIRES OF THIS MENU.


WHAT ARE YOU THINKING OF?
I AM HOMESICK.


DO YOU WANT TO GO HOME TO YOUR PEOPLE?
YES.


ALL RIGHT. GO.


WAIT. I MUST GIVE YOU SOMETHING. SOMETHING...

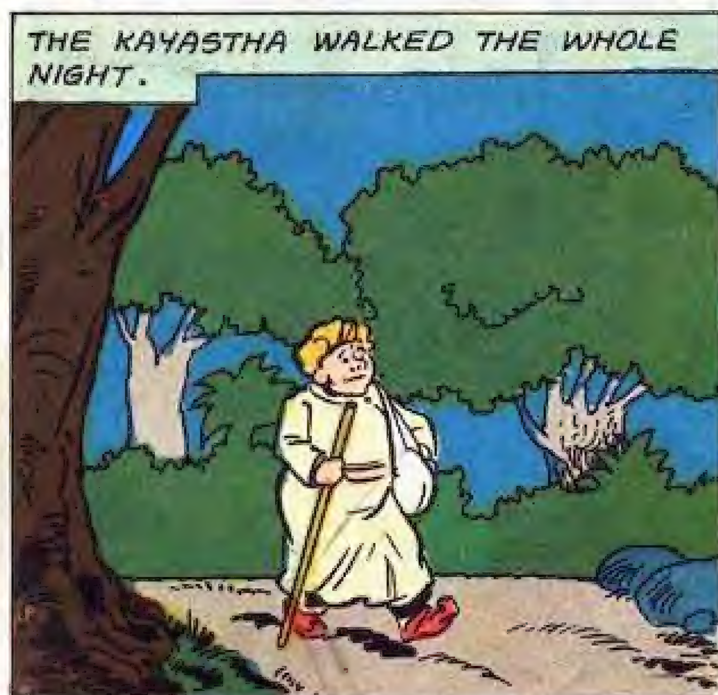

AH..!


HERE ARE THREE STRANDS OF HAIR FROM MY MOUSTACHE.


ANY TIME YOU NEED ME JUST BURN THEM.

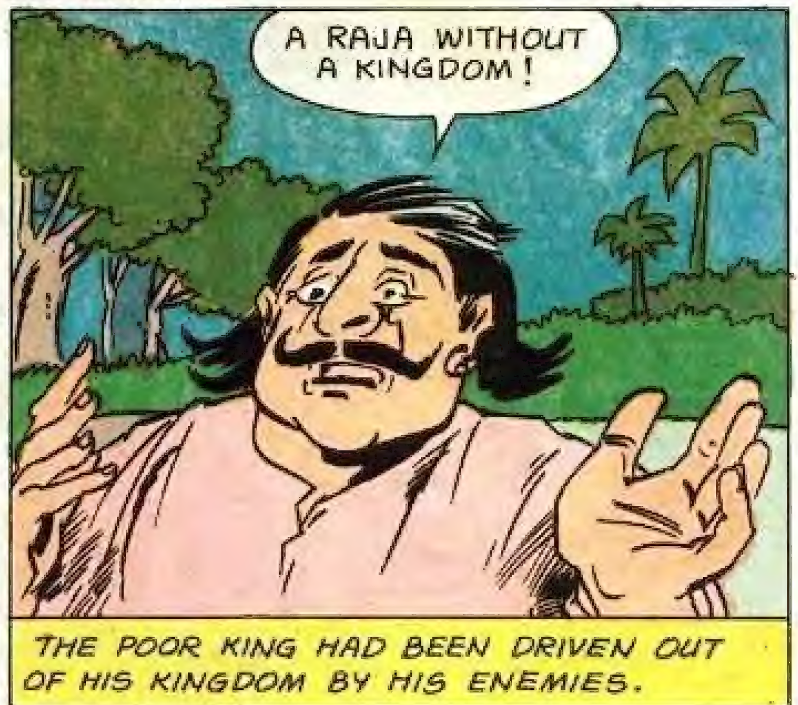

THE KAYASTHA TUCKED THE GIFT INTO HIS TURBAN ...


...AND LEFT.
I'LL MISS YOU!


THE KAYASTHA WALKED THE WHOLE NIGHT.


WHO'S THAT!


YOU, MAHARAJ ?
MAHARAJ ! HA-HA-HA ! WHAT, A JOKE !


A RAJA WITHOUT A KINGDOM !
THE POOR KING HAD BEEN DRIVEN OUT OF HIS KINGDOM BY HIS ENEMIES.


I'LL HELP YOU, MAHARAJ.
THANK YOU, FRIEND. BUT YOU CAN'T FIGHT...


THE KAYASTHA MADE A FIRE...
?


...AND BURNT THE STRANDS OF HAIR. AND LO!
DO YOU NEED ME ?


I WANT YOU TO DRIVE AWAY THE KING'S ENEMIES.
WITH PLEASURE!
!!


AND THE DEMON VANISHED.
WHO IS HE?
ZOOMooo
IT'S A LONG STORY.


AS THE KAYASTHA CONCLUDED THE STRANGE STORY —
MEN! MY ENEMIES HAVE SENT MEN AFTER ME!


THE MEN HOWEVER TURNED OUT TO BE HIS OWN SUBJECTS.
A HIDEOUS CREATURE APPEARED FROM NOWHERE...


...AND CHASED AWAY YOUR ENEMIES.
WE HAVE COME HERE TO TAKE YOU BACK TO THE KINGDOM.


FRIEND, YOU MUST COME WITH ME AND BE MY MINISTER.
THE KAYASTHA LIVED HAPPILY THEREAFTER.

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